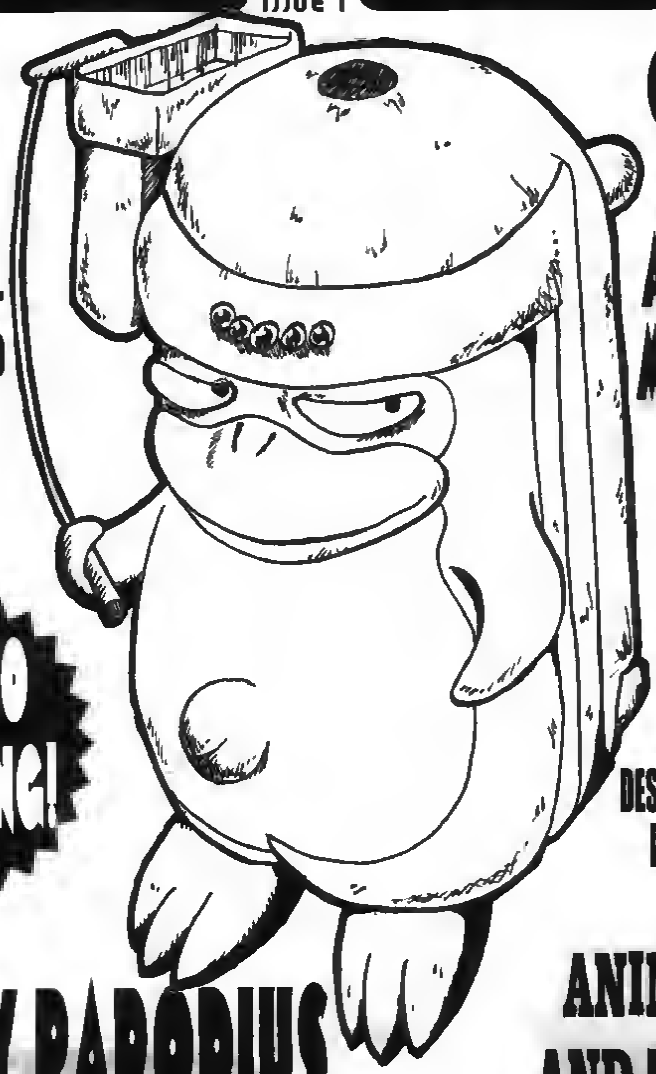
TŌKYŌ FAN

VIDEO GAMES ● MOVIES ● ANIME ● STUFF

ISSUE 1



GAME AND ANIME MUSIC!

CHINDOGU - WHAT IS IT?

RETRO GAMING!

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2

SEXY PARODIUS

GET DOWN AND DIRTY ON THE SEGA SATURN

ANIME AND THE PC ENGINE

TŌKYŌ FAN

ISSUE 1 - MARCH 1997

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"Darkness reigns at the foot of the lighthouse."
Japanese Proverb

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EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO THE FANTASY ZONE!

Hi there, and if you don't know what the above heading is all about, then I guess you aren't reading this for it's gaming content, so:

KONNICHI WA!

And if you didn't understand that then I can presume that you're not reading this because of the anime/manga content. However, if you couldn't work out what either of the above headings are on about, then here's your big chance to expand your mind.

HELLO, I'M MISTER ED

Well, I'm not actually, I'm the Ed, which is a totally different thing if you know all about ageing American comedy shows. I'm afraid you'll have to get used to obscure headings popping up all over the place, it's just one of those things. Anyway, if you're reading this (and if you're not then I may as well stop typing now), I must thank you for at least giving *Tokyo Fan* more than just a passing glance. It's not an easy task to produce a fanzine that is worthwhile reading (and I hope this one is), but it can be a very rewarding experience (spiritually) and I hope the effort's been worth it. This 'zine is not run for profit; we've tried to keep the price down enough to just cover the cost of reproduction, along with a little extra for the kitty (advertising, replacement printer ink etc.). But enough of the tedious serious stuff, what's *Tokyo Fan* all about?

YES, WHAT?

You really want to know?

YES!

OK, I'll tell you. First and foremost, we cover video games, from golden oldies to the latest Import titles. Obviously the amount we can cover largely depends on the size of my wallet, so we can't promise to review every new game that comes out. We're not a professional mag after all! Saturn and PlayStation will get their own fair share, with a bit of PC thrown in now and again too. Game music CDs will also feature. Our second main avenue is that of anything Japanesey, especially anime and manga. I originally intended to concentrate solely on these, but the market has taken a bit of a plunge lately, making it difficult to find anything new and interesting to say. If you're only interested in one of the above subjects, why not give the other a try? I can certainly recommend both, but remember that there are as many dodgy anime videos as there are crap games, so don't be put off by the first thing you try. Because it is the nature of the Universe to weave complex webs around things of apparent simplicity, we're going to cover movies, videos and anything else interesting that crops up in the meantime. That's my excuse anyway.

ARE YOU THROUGH YET?

Almost. Please remember that fanzines thrive on support from the readers. Tell your friends. Word of mouth is vital to us as advertising can be a tremendous problem. Let us know what you think of the 'zine and what you'd like to see in the future. We will listen. But above all, enjoy it!

Paul Weller, Editor

Video Games
Probably the most fun you can have on your own, video games have progressed dramatically from the days of blocky, unrealistic graphics and beeping tunes (although some of the oldies are still the best.)

Anime/manga
Anime (pronounced a-nee-may) is the word used for animation from Japan. It is aimed at an older audience than western animation and can, at best, be up there with the finest that Hollywood can provide. Manga is the word for Japanese comics, which are very similar to it's animation. They are usually far longer, and a lot more fluid that western comics and can be found in most comic shops, although a few graphic novels have made it into UK bookshops.

If this one sells well enough, issue 2 of Tokyo Fan will be out around 7th July. To order, send a cheque or postal order made out to *Paul Weller* to

Cost - £1.90 per issue including p&p.

NEWSDESK

ZENTRAEDI ALERT!

Classic anime show Macross seems to be making a bit of a comeback on consoles The PlayStation has Macross Digital Mission VF-X, a very promising looking 3D flight-sim/shoot 'em up (pictured), while Saturn owners will soon be playing what looks like a more traditional sprite-based affair. Both games are out this spring in Japan.

Nintendo 64 owners will also have their fair share of Macross with a game based on it's American incarnation - Robotech. Only pre-production shots have been released, but it looks like it could be hot, especially with the analogue stick for control

JAPAN'S TOP FIVE GAMES

1. Rage Racer (PlayStation)
2. Dragon Quest III (Super Famicom)
3. Super Donkey Kong 3 (Super Famicom)
4. Enemy Zero (Saturn)
5. Super Mario 64 (Nintendo 64)

SEGA SOUNDTRACKS

CD's of game music are nothing new in Japan, and two of Sega's latest arcade hits have been given the treatment. Scud Race and Virtua Fighter 3 OST's are out now Hassle importers for them!

THIS JUST IN.....THIS JUST IN.....THIS JUST

MARS ATTACKS! THE VERDICT

Director Tim Burton has always had a passion for the strange, and Mars Attacks! is no exception. Following the now popular alien invasion storyline, it goes mainly for laughs rather than drama. There's not much point in explaining the plot - little green men land and blow the crap out of anything and everything they see, purely for the fun of it. No sinister motives or underlying messages here, just pure mayhem.

The Martians are superbly rendered in CGI, and move with a deliberate puppet like motion, their heads eerily shooting from side to side. In fact, out of the whole cast, the Martians are the only thing in the movie with any character to them, The Star laden cast, despite a slow first half to introduce them all, has very little character development and this is part of the movie's downfall. Although it may be intentional, you just don't care when they get zapped as they're just cardboard cut-outs on the set.

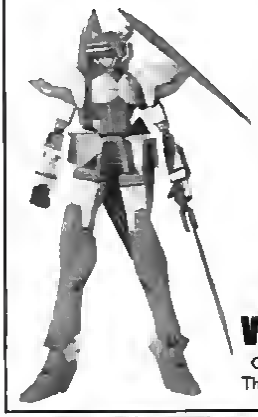
The Martians are basically Gremlins in a different skin, very mischievous, and this is where the laughs come from, with their 'operations' and general larking about. In fact, they could have filmed this as Gremlins 3 and no one would have nouced the difference.

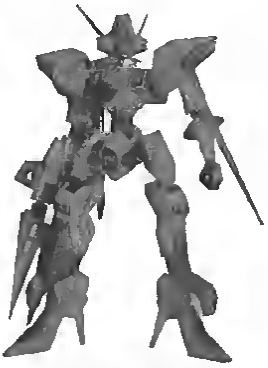
There are plenty of good things in this film - the effects, the humour and the typical Burton weirdness, but I can't help feeling a little disappointed Independence Day would have benefited from the destructive mayhem of Mars Attacks! but even that had deeper characters than this! Great effects, though

A JOLLY GOOD FISTING

The second compiled graphic novel of Post-apocalyptic-martial-arts-gore-fest *The Fist Of The North Star* is out in the USA now, and should appear in UK comics shops soon. *Fist* is the story of Kenshiro, a master of a martial art that makes heads explode and bodies split in two! This second novel, The Night Of The Jackal, sees Bat and Lynne, two young orphans call for Ken's help But when he comes, the dangerous Jackal gang follow him.

Fist is a brilliant action comic and I strongly urge everyone to track it down as soon as they can





VIRTUAL-ON REAL-ON

Out in Japan now is a new range of models from the Sega Coin-Op, Virtual-On. They're so damn smart that I just had to show some pics of them!

FIGHTING FRENZY

Video games have always had a tradition of being made into anime and vice versa. Lately, beat 'em ups seem to be getting the full treatment though. The excellent Street Fighter II, Fatal Fury and Samurai Showdown have all made it onto the screen. The latest in this long line is Capcom's popular Vampire Hunter, known as Darkstalkers in the West, which has just come out in Japan.

The 10 volume series Street Fighter II V is out now in America, courtesy of Manga Video, both dubbed and subtitled. There is no sign of it over here yet, and if it does emerge eventually, it is most likely to be dubbed only.

On the subject of Manga Video, it seems that part four of Macross Plus will finally be released soon. And about bloody time too!

THE HOBBIT MOVIE!

Rumour has it that director Peter Jackson is contemplating a movie version of J R R Tolkien's classic story, *The Hobbit*. Putting such a well-loved book onto the screen will be no easy task, and being a big fan of Tolkien, I'm not sure I want to see anyone try.

To get the casting spot on, the locations just right and the atmosphere of the story is going to be a stupendous task, but at least the digital effects today are up to creating the dragon Smaug But how much will be cut to fit it all in?

NEW IN JAPAN

All the latest releases from the East.

GAMES

Elevator Action Returns (Saturn - Victor)
Sakura Wars (Saturn - Sega)
Neon Genesis Evangelion (Saturn - Sega)
Puyo Puyo Sun (Saturn - Compile)
Harmful Park (PlayStation - Sky Sink System)
Bomber Man 5 (Super Famicom - Hudson)
Tenchi Muyo! (Saturn - Pioneer LDC)
Namco Museum Vol 5 (PlayStation - Namco)
Anime Freak FX Vol 4 (PCFX - NEC Home Electronics)

VIDEOS

Slayers Next Vol 5
Gall Force The Revolution Vol 3
Pretty Sammy TV 2
Virtua Fighter Customise Clip
TV Series Ranma 1/2 27, 28

COMPACT DISCS

Mobile Suit Gundam W2
Blind Target - 2
Cutey Honey F
Tenchi Muyo Radio Jukebox Disc 2
Tokimeki Memorial No 8
Slayers N EX Vol 1

COMICS

Samurai Spirits 4
Hard Boiled Papa 6
Virtua Fighter Kids
Side Story of Gundam Z
Pretty Sammy 1
Sakura Wars - Anthology Comic

The art of CHINDOGU

101 UNUSELESS JAPANESE INVENTIONS

By Kenji Kawakami
Translated by Dan Papia
Edited by Hugh Fearney-Whittingstall
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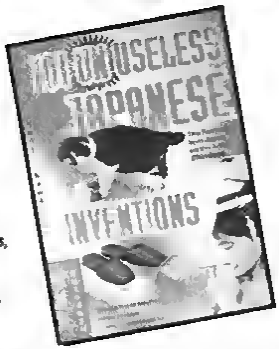


Those of you who have idly flicked through the TV channels when the kid's programmes are on may have come across the idea of Chindogu on 'It'll Never Work.' The basis behind each Chindogu (which literally means an odd or distorted tool) is that it must be an object which at first, seems to fulfil a purpose, but on closer inspection is (almost) totally useless. The creator and founder of Chindogu is Kenji Kawakami, who was originally a scriptwriter for anime series in the sixties, and then became the editor of a home shopping magazine. It was here that the idea first came about. He has now written four books on the subject and the International Chindogu Society has over 10,000 members.

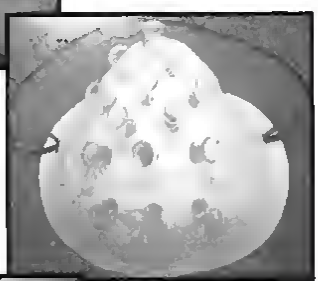
The book itself contains 101 of these utterly useless inventions in full colour, each with an accompanying piece of text that explains what it is, and why you want it so badly. The inventions, as you can see from the pictures, range from the ludicrously silly (the hydrophobe's bath suit, for example) to the nearly useful (the portable subway strap). Some are merely amusing, others are hilarious, and the descriptions are written so seriously, with a good dose of very dry humour that it makes it even funnier.

Also included is an application form for the International Chindogu Society, which encourages any potentially useless inventors to get their ideas officially on paper and maybe in future ICS literature.

This is a perfect conversation piece and if anyone out there got a duff batch of Christmas prezzies this year, cheer yourself up and get a copy. At just over a fiver it's a barg!

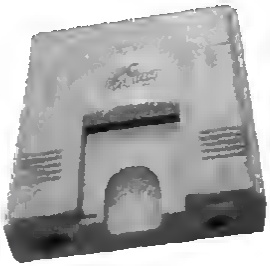
This Wide Awake Eyeopener is the ideal thing to keep you awake when you need to the most. And yes, they're regular clothes pegs.

Well I don't know about you, but I think this Butter Stick is a pretty smart idea. I wouldn't be surprised if I spotted it in a supermarket in a couple of years time. I'd buy it anyway.



For those of you who are into destroying your lungs, this Heavy Smoker's Mask is just the ticket. Strangely enough, it bears a distinct resemblance to the breathing masks in the manga, Nausicaa Of The Valley Of Wind!

If you ever have had trouble crossing a busy main road, then this Portable Zebra Crossing is all you need. Just lay it down and cars have no alternative but to stop for you (although I'm sure the makers accept no responsibility for any injury or loss of life resulting from it's use.)



DIGITAL ANIME
The PC Engine

Many people may not realise this, but anime has always been an important element in video games. A walk through any arcade or a glance at any (successful) console from the humble NES (or FAMICOM in Japan) to the PlayStation will confirm this. In fact, a large proportion of the people who are now hooked on anime and manga may have had their first glimpse of the anime style in a video games, even if they did not realise it at the time.

But even from the beginning, most anime based games didn't reach the UK unchanged in some way, sometimes just the name, but more often than not more drastically than that. Who among you while fighting with the Master System joypad when playing Black Belt would have thought that in it's native country it was originally called Hokuto No Ken (The Fist of the North Star). Anyone familiar with the game and the comic will now realise that the way the baddies 'exploded' really does make sense. Further along the time line, did anyone out there realise that Mystic Defender on the Sega Mega Drive (along with Spellcaster on the Master System) was the Western incarnation of top manga Kujaku-O, even if the hero now wears trousers?

Another Fist of the North Star romp on the Mega Drive was renamed Last Battle, and although fewer changes were made, the bloodily exploding bodies and heads of the original were painfully absent in the UK version. In fact, with the excepoon of a few older titles (Zillion on MS is a good example), import software is often the only way to get hold of original anime games, and despite the high price, it has usually always been worth it. Especially when anime used to be very rare - more often than not, the decision to buy a game was based on the amount of anime-style in it.

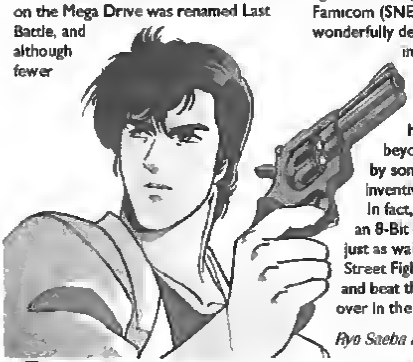
The Secret Of Blue Water

PC WHAT?

For die hard anime fans, NEC's wonder machine, the PC Engine, was (and still is in some respects) THE God of games consoles. Despite never being released in the UK (although it was often rumoured), and losing in the US due to some disgracefully poor advertising and promotion (being called a Turbografx-16 didn't help much either), the PC Engine was a huge success in Japan and survived in the West care of the importers.

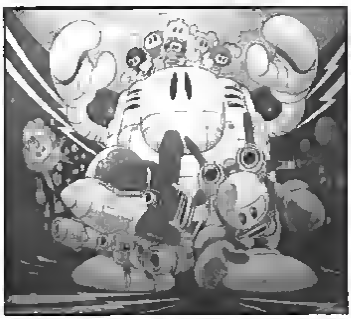
For a machine with an inferior specification, it easily held it's own against the Megadrive and Super Famicom (SNES), thanks to some wonderfully designed custom chips inside. Out of the three machines, the PC Engine is the only one that has constantly had it's capabilities pushed beyond the believable limits by some very skilful and inventive programming.

In fact, even though it was only an 8-Bit console, it handled games just as wall as a 16-Bit machine (as Street Fighter II' proves very well), and beat the big boys many times over in the gameplay stakes.



Ryo Saeba is City Hunter

However the major card up NEC's sleeve, and the primary reason for the success of the 'Engine was it's CD-ROM drive - the first on any home console (and released way ahead of Sega's failed effort). Having a CD-ROM gave it a distinct advantage with both sound and storage capacity for graphics etc and allowed expansive anime-style intros to become standard. As such, the 'Engine became the primary target for games based on the mass of comics and animated series' in Japan.



The awesome Star Paroja had one of the best intro's around

But the games were not restricted to TV or comic licenses. The creative talent working on games for this machine and others was so great that many games had enough style and depth of character to spawn animated videos of their own. Download, Galaxy Fraulein Yuna, Dragonslayer, Dragon Knight and probably the greatest RPG of all time, Ys (pronounced EE-ss) all became either one-shot videos, or short series, with many also making it into comic format. This trend continues today with manga

Schbibin Man 3

of PlayStation titles such as Jumping Flash and Toshinden, and of course, the excellent animated Street Fighter II movie.

Many other games on the PC Engine feature lengthy anime intro sequences. Among the noteworthy are Star Parojo, Schbibin Man 3, Dracula X, Dungeon Explorer II, Far East of Eden II (Maru), Snatcher and the Cosmic Fantasy RPG's.

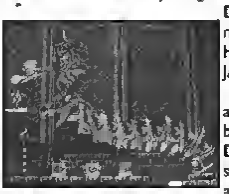
A HANDFUL OF GAMES

MACROSS 2036
(MASIYA, CD-ROM, JAPAN)

With the player taking control of Maria Jenus, this dumps you in the hot seat of a Valkyrie fighter in a horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up. As a game, it's a fair blaster, if not outstanding, but nice touches during play (such as a battle going on in the background) and loads and loads of animated sequences throughout make this a must for Macross fans. Also, the game soundtrack is lifted straight from the original, so it's an OST as well - double value!

RANMA 1/2
(MASIYA, CD-ROM, JAPAN)

There are three Ranma games in total on the 'Engine, all on CD-ROM, based on the immensely popular comic of the sex-changing martial artist. The first is a fairly primitive beat 'em up, and even with some lengthy animated sequences that vary in quality, it fails to really entertain. The second is a superb Digital Comic (see box-off), which tells the story of some big white bear intent on marrying Girl-type Ranma, and intends on keeping Him/Her female for ever with the sap of a special flower. It's quite a lengthy and varied adventure, with the player taking on different roles as the story progresses, and is very funny in places, even if you don't understand a word of Japanese. To cap it all, the graphics are very well drawn, a vast improvement over the first game, and there are some lovely animations and original fighting scenes. The third game is a one-on-one beat 'em up which is competently executed, but far surpassed by the superb animated intros in between levels, easily the best reason to buy the game!



Anime style shoot 'em up action in Cotton

DORAEMON [dor-eye-mon] (HUDSON SOFT, HUCARD/CD-ROM, JAPAN)

Based on the cute kid's anime about a robotic blue cat, the first Doraemon game is a smart overhead action affair that involved digging holes for the nasties to fall in. Great music. The second is a platformer subtitled DORABIAN NIGHT. It has more simplistic graphics and poorer music, and despite the intended age group, it does get very tricky towards

COMING TO AMERICA

When anime style games on the 'Engine did eventually reach the US, they were mostly RPG's. Naturally they would have to be translated and re-dubbed in English, and this has been achieved with varying degrees of success. Here are a few examples of the purists dreams and nightmares.

YS I & II (CD-ROM, RPG)

Surely one of the finest RPG's in existence (and great value with both games on one CD), the translation is superb. Almost all of the original names remain the same, and the voice acting is good enough to put companies like Manga Video to shame. Top marks, matey.

BEST LINE. "Get out of here now. Or you will perish, like the others!"

YS III (CD-RON, RPG)

After the excellent effort on the first two, much was expected of this instalment. I remember slipping the CD in, turning on the power and....GAG! HAK! VOM! The voice over of the Japanese intro tells the legend of an ancient warrior with fair hair that defeated the evil demon Galbaran many years ago. But wait a minute! The hideously nasal American voice-over drools on about Adol defeating 'Demanicus' and urging the player to be brave and bold, as though you've already completed the game. What were they on? The in game speech, while being very frequent, is utterly terrible. They must have dragged people of the street to dub it, as there sure as hell weren't any actors involved. And if this isn't bad enough, most of the names have been changed. Don't get me wrong, this is still a great game, but the translation is a fine lesson in how NOT to do it.

BEST LINE. "Think back to your worst nightmare." (PUKE)

DUNGEON EXPLORER II (CD-ROM, ACTION RPG)

This is a game with quite lengthy animated scenes, and a fair chunk of dialogue, so it was interesting to hear how it turned out. The acting is very competent, with the casting for the evil Phades being particularly good. As such, it is a game that you can quite happily play without cringing, and a welcome return to the quality dubbing of Ys.

BEST LINE. "Though evil endures and legends don't die...the hero exists in a BLINK! of time's eye"

DRAGON SLAYER - THE LEGEND OF NEROES (CD-ROM, RPG)

Loads of dialogue throughout this game gives the perfect chance to show off how good acting in games can be. It's just a pity they made a pig's ear of it then. Although not as drastically awful as Ys III, it's stilted and obviously being read straight from the script. The intro is fine, but the ending is particularly uncomfortable which is a shame as it takes the feeling out of a really dramatic scene. Ho hum.

BEST LINE. "What's eating you, Your Highness?"

EXILE (CD-ROM, ACTION RPG)

An average game made up for with frequent and attractive cut-scenes. Working Designs did a very competent job of the translation. The acting is fine, if not brilliant, and character voices are well chosen and it all leaves you with a nice warm glow inside. I also hear they're working on 32 bit tides, so there's still some hope yet.

BEST LINE. "...I'll strangle you with your entrails!"

the end (I've yet to complete it and I'm a platform junkie!).

YAWARA

(SOFIX, CD-ROM, JAPAN)

Another Digital Comic based on an appealing anime and manga series. This game places the player in the shoes of a young sports journalist called Matsuda as he follows the career of Yawara, a 'cute and fashionable judo girl.' Nicely drawn graphics with some very good animated bits here and there, and a long playing time give this the thumbs up. There's also a bouncy intro song too!

CITY HUNTER

(SUNSOFT, HUCARD, JAPAN)

Unfortunately, the huge potential of the license was hardly touched upon in this platform-adventure style game. Choosing from various missions, you as top bodyguard-cum-private-eye Ryo Saeba, must run around shooting the bad guys while gathering information from various people to complete the level. It's quite fun and has some excellent music, but it dated fast and the wealth of Japanese text makes it hard to really get involved.

The Ranma 1/2 games all had brilliant animated scenes in them.

There are so many other anime based games on the 'Engine that I can't list them all here, but here's a few you may recognise: Padabor (Digi-Comic), Yu Yu Hakusho (Digi-Comic), Sailor Moon (Digi-Comic), Future Boy Conan (Platform), Bubble Gum Crash (Adventure), Space Adventure Cobra I & II (Digi-Comics), Urusei Yatsura (Digi-Comic), Dragon Ball (Beat 'em up), and Maison Ikkoku (Adventure).

Also, one interesting point is that the cover artwork for the superb shoot 'em up Winds of Thunder (Lords of Thunder in the US) was done by none other than Appleseed and Ghost in the Shell creator Masamune Shirow.

One of the best anime ever, Gunbuster made it onto the PC Engine as a Digital Comic

DIGITAL COMICS

Digi-comics are a style of game that although very popular in Japan, have been surprisingly ignored by the West: only very few have ever surfaced officially - Snatcher on Mega-CD for example.

The style of gameplay in the majority of Digital Comics is very simple. Basically, you are presented with a situation, along with a series of actions you can perform. Most of these will do something, but the correct ones will progress the story to the next scene. Depending on the skill of the designers, a surprising amount of freedom can be accomplished considering the 'multiple choice' approach. The Ranma 1/2 game is a prime example, with a good freedom of movement, and even fight scenes!

As most Digi-Comics are there to tell a story, you'll most probably not be able to lose - just get stuck. There are exceptions (like Gunbuster) which give you a certain number of errors for each segment before you have to replay.

Although this may sound as dubious as 'interactive movie,' I have found all the Digi-Comics I've played so far to be very enjoyable, and I'll always go back to them after they've been completed. For the most part, the sheer amount of quality drawn artwork is enough in itself to play them and once the minor problem of the options being in Japanese is overcome (which isn't all that difficult) then what you are left with is a very pretty and enjoyable 'hands-on' anime movie.

But don't take my word for it. Go on out and see for yourself. (If you can track them down, which is no easy task these days, I would highly recommend the Ranma 1/2 and Secret of Blue Water Digi-Comics, because they're top!)

COPY CATS

On the subject of anime style games, it is interesting to see how this directly influenced Western companies, particularly in the days of the Amiga, who held the mistaken belief that they could come any where near the quality of the Japanese stuff.

SWITCHBLADE

One of the earlier influences can be seen on the picture of the hero's face that you always seemed to see, and the squat (SD) platform game style. Nearly, but no thanks.

APIDYA

An average Amiga shoot 'em up that featured a terribly drawn anime-esque intro sequence and also had it's name in (incorrect) Japanese on the title screen. Tried desperately to be consoley. Failed.

LEANDER

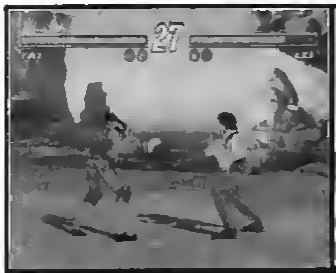
Another console inspired-and-failed platformer, this one had a nice pic in the intro of a blokey charging with a sword. Pity they copied it out of the Japanese Kyuku-O II Megadrive instruction manual though!

Of course, games like Metal & Lace have used actual manga artists and shown how it should be done, and all the giant robot games originate from crumbly Japanese anime, so there you go.

STOP PRESS

SEGA AND NAMCO JOIN FORCES AT LAST!

Yes folks, as you can see from our ULTRA-EXCLUSIVE pictures, the two giants of the console industry have finally decided to join together for what must be the most exciting project EVER. As yet untitled, this new 3D beat 'em up combines the characters from the highly successful TEKKEN and VIRTUA FIGHTER series and will be available on both Saturn and PlayStation sometime this summer (in Japan). The Japanese press have gone literally wild with excitement following the announcement of this game, with more than a little speculation on why these two major rivals have chosen to work with each other, although the Nintendo 64 cannot be ignored as part of the reason. More details as they come.



Although these are very early pictures, they show some very important aspects of the game. As you can see, both Tekken and VF style energy bars are selectable, although this makes no difference to actual gameplay. Also, the original backdrops from both games will remain, with a whole range of new ones. You may notice that the characters are the same, but as already mentioned, these are from a working version of the game - for the finished item, we are promised all new costumes for EVERY character!

NEXT ISSUE: THE PANZER DRAGOON CHEAT THAT SHOCKED JAPAN

MR PEACH LIVE FROM MOAN CITY

PEACH: Well here I am folks, coming to you live from everyone's favourite place, Moan City. And boy have I got a lot to moan about! Every issue, I'll be giving you a piece of wisdom that will carry you through the day. There's certainly enough to complain about, as you'd see if you were here from all the long faces gathered around me. Let's ask someone here what's bothering them. Yes, you. The young boy with the stoat. What's up? You're live on air.

BOY: Um. Well, I'm fed up with the size of boxes that video games come in.

PEACH: And why is that, my spotty little chum?

BOY: They're just too big.

PEACH: You've certainly hit the nail on the spleen there pally! Just WHY THE HELL do PlayStation games come in double CD sized boxes? Apart from taking up twice the room of normal boxes, you just can't cram 'em into a CD rack however hard you try. And I should know 'coz I have! What on Earth is the point of wasting valuable resources and making storage inconvenient for the purchaser? Of course it all comes down to money. *My box is bigger so I must be better.* Sony aren't the only ones guilty of this crime. What's with the boxes for Saturn games. A big, flat slab that can't even hold the CD firm inside it. Oh how many times have I opened up a box to find the CD tumbling away out of control! At least they're more storage efficient than Sony's but they're still NOT GOOD ENOUGH. Why can't they all take a leaf out of Sega Japan's book and supply games in a standard, single CD casing? Apart from being smaller, neater and easier to store, I just reckon they look a lot better anyway. Face it folks, bigger is NOT always better.

BOOM MICHAEL CRICHTON IN COMA SHOCK

Anyone unfortunate enough to catch Coma on TV in January this year had the chance to play one of the most exciting games in movie history. Yes, it's *Spot The Boom Mic* time.

Not content with sneaking it's way into frame a couple of times, it then went on to wobble around as it tracked the actors in the scene below! Hello? Mr Director? In fact, I think the boom mic got more screen time that Michael Douglas. Perhaps Mr Crichton should stick to writing books eh?

UPDATE! Boom mic antics were also prevalent in Gibbo thriller *Ransom*. If you have spotted the little devil anywhere else, drop us a line.

DUMB IDIOT IN FAMILY FORTUNES SHOCKER

The following is a true account. The contestant's identity has been withheld to protect the innocent.

Les Dennis: Name a part of the body with four letters.

Stupid Contestant: Arms.

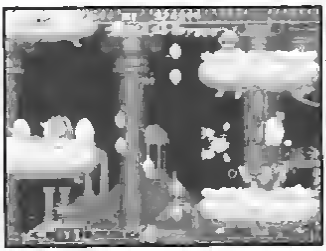
GAME REVIEWS

SEXY PARODIUS

With the advent of the 32-Bit super-consoles came the apparent demise of the traditional 2D shoot 'em up. Not because they're no fun anymore, but because developers have become increasingly stale when it comes to game design, and they're more interested in playing with their latest graphical toy - polygons. But there is a bright light shining in the heavens for all those fans of sprite-based gameplay, and it's name is Konami.

The first Parodius is a classic and was an important step for Konami - parodying their Gradius series with crazy characters and bizarre setong, it was an instant success and has spawned several sequels (mainly on the Super Famicom/SNES).

But when the original Parodius was released on Saturn and PlayStation, it was a disappointment. However, a strange characteristic of Konami is that it always takes them a couple of failed attempts on every new machine before they suddenly get to grips with it and start to make an impression. And so we have Sexy Parodius.

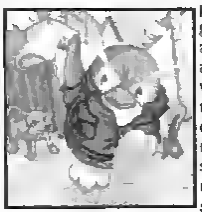


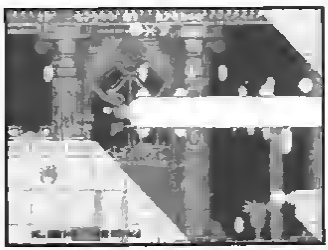
As these bathing girls scroll up screen, they fire bubbles at you. Watch out for the muscle-bound bloke - called Catharine!

The first thing that strikes you is that this game has so much energy. It's difficult to describe, but it is one of the first 32-Bit games that has given me the same buzz that I used to get in the days of the PC Engine. It screams 'Play Me!'

As usual with the Parodius series, the music consists mostly of arrangements of classical and other well known tunes, and it has to get a special mention as is it superb, in the finest catchy-Japanese-game-BGM style. This is how game music should sound, not all sound and no tune like a lot of the techno crap you get in most modern releases. Call me old fashioned (or just plain weird), but I enjoy that synthi-muzak that the Japanese do so well. One big downer though is that the music is somehow 'encoded' on the CD so you can't listen to it outside of the game. And there's no sound test! Waaah!

Although sprite-based, the graphics are perfectly suited to the game, with nice animation, big bosses and it's easy to see what's going on all the time. The Saturn shifts quite a bit around with not even a hint of slowing down either, unlike certain other shoot 'em ups I could mention, so top marks there. The usual array of imaginative and very weird creatures is still here too, with some





Some impressive firepower is available!

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

To complete Sexy Parodius, you have to play through seven stages. But Konami have worked around the set pattern of normal shoot 'em ups and given you the chance of choosing your own route. From stage 2 onwards, you are assigned a number of objects to collect or shoot, and if you succeed you are then taken on an alternative next level.

From experience, it's quite a task to get your quota of items in one try, so the easiest (if not very smart) way of ensuring success is to keep getting yourself killed, until you've done it. You may regret it though as the 'success' levels are a lot harder than the 'failure' ones.

POWER UP

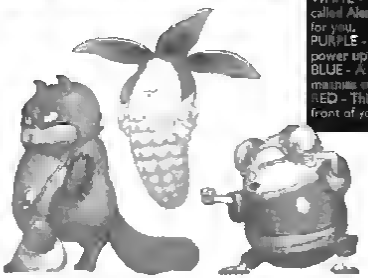
Sexy Parodius uses the tried and tested Gradius method of power-ups. Certain enemies (usually red) drop capsules which when shot and collecting these moves up your 'power up select marker' by one item. When the weapon of your choice is highlighted, just push the button! For those of you who prefer to keep your eyes on the action, auto and semiauto power up options are available.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

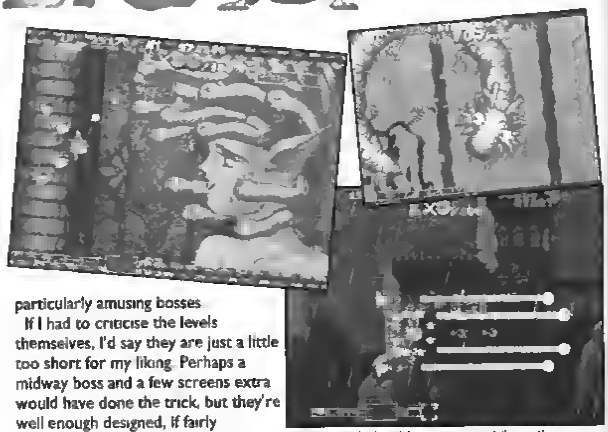
Before entering level 6 you are presented with a special stage. Bosses from the first Parodius game appear and as you defeat them, tiles fall off the wall behind you, which gradually reveals a picture. You only get one try at this though, so be careful!

DING DONG THE WICKED WITCH IS DEAD

Sometimes an enemy will drop a bell instead of a capsule when destroyed. These change colour when shot and each colour has a different effect
YELLOW - The most common bell, just gives you bonus points
GREEN - This enlarges your ship and makes you invincible for a short time.
WHITE - This brings in a pink Elvis Main lookalike called Alex, who generally just attacks enemies for you.
PURPLE - This turns all enemies on screen into power up capsules. Very handy.
BLUE - A super bomb that destroys most enemies on screen
RED - This throws out a vertical laser barrier in front of your ship



End of level bosses are as drug-induced as ever, especially the penguin with the japanese style toilet on his head (star of the front cover this issue)

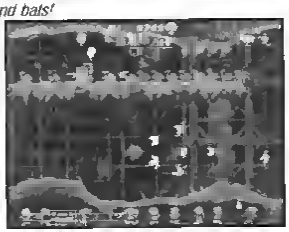


particularly amusing bosses.

If I had to criticise the levels themselves, I'd say they are just a little too short for my liking. Perhaps a midway boss and a few screens extra would have done the trick, but they're well enough designed, if fairly formulaic, and immense fun all the same and that's what really matters. There are plenty of options to adjust lives and so on, but I recommend that you show some restraint otherwise it could be all over way too soon.

All in all, it may not be as fresh as it was when the first Parodius was released, and it's unlikely to covert anyone who won't look at a game unless it's 3D (you poor saps), but for those of you who want and old-school shoot 'em up that is great fun to play, it could be just the medicine you need !!

The castle level has a snippet from the Dracula (Castlevania) music at the start! And bats!



Shoot the supports to drop the platforms

CHARACTER SELECT

As with any Parodius game, you get a selection of characters to choose from. With Sexy Parodius, the Player 2 characters are essentially the same, but differ graphically.

VIC VIPER/LORD BRITISH The original ship from the Gradius games, it's very average weapons make it one for the nostalgia fans only. No doubt there are people out there that would swear by it but the lack of really major weaponry make it for die-hard players only.

IVAN/TOBY A very angry looking penguin, Ivan is equipped with bombs on parachutes, 3 way shot (upgradable) and options. A standard set up, but effective when powered up, the option being a definite plus.

HIKARU/AKANE A scantily clad girly riding astride a missile (suggestive of nothing at all, of course), Hikaru has some crazy power-ups that include the ability to fire carrots at the enemy and options the shape of rabbit heads! She also has a heavy bomb and directional shots.

MAMBO/SAMBA A flat fish, Mambo is a good character to start with. Power-ups generally give 'fiend' fish options that fire either bubbles, needle lasers or wave lasers. But the best of all is the angular homing lasers that, when at high power, really do some damage.

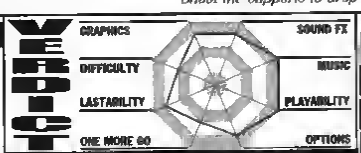
MICHAEL/GABRIEL A flying pig, which is nothing new to Parodius, Michael has double missiles and wave & 3 way shots. He is without options, but this is made up for by the ability to power up existing weapons to quite frightening levels.

KOITSU/AITSU Solid proof that the guys who programmed this had to be on something, Koitsu is a blue stick man standing on a paper aeroplane! His weapons include stick-man-bombs, homing basketballs and 3 way lasers. Koitsu can also power up his current weapon, which progressively adds another stick man atop the plane.

OPTION/MULTIPLE After being ordered around all this time, the option is now a character in it's own right. It's weapons are strange, transforming him into Michael the pig or setting him on Koitsu's plane for 3 way shot, and making him the ship from the ageing shoot 'em up Thunderceus with rebounding shots. Weirdgus.

SHOOTING STAR/ BLACK VIPER A sleek looking ship with some devastating weaponry – but it takes time to become truly powerful. This ship gets twin mounted laser pods (like R Type), energy balls that power up (like R Type) or an R-Type style beam laser which when powered up is enormous and can last for ages. Mass destruction!

INFO BOX
FORMAT
Saturn
MAKER
Konami
GAME STYLE
Shoot 'em up
PAL CONVERSION
Import Only



The best 2D shoot 'em up on the Saturn, and a really enjoyable game. Lacking in the originality and character of the original, but a worthy addition to the Parodius line.

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2

Because racing games and beat 'em ups seem to be the staple diet of most gamers these days, to make any impact new games have to stand out from the crowd.

Taking all the best bits from the original and tweaking any niggles and complaints that gamers had, Destruction Derby 2 does come across as something different from the norm.

DD2's main appeal derives from the glorious smash-ups and collisions as you pound into the sides of other cars. All manner of bits fly off and breathtaking spins and jumps are now possible. In fact, the destructive aspect of the game can be highly satisfying at times, especially when you've been getting nowhere for a while and suddenly you manage to smash a competitor into a wild spin, gaining quite a few points in the process.

As far as the racing aspect of the game is concerned, it just doesn't have the same kind of punch as something like Ridge Racer Revolution. It's competent but nothing more, even taking into account some nice track designs later in the game. But for beginners at least, forget trying to get first place. Instead, just go for broke - drive backwards, stop sharply, do mid air spins and enjoy it. This is what DD2 is all about.

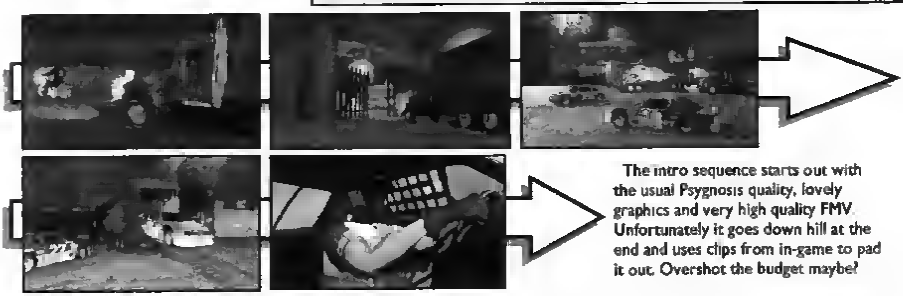
But despite the instant and violent fun to be had, I can't help but feel that something is missing. Sure, the music is well suited, presentation is good enough, and the in game graphics are very pleasant to the eye. A track layout with car indicators would've been nice, as well as a rear view mirror, but it doesn't detract too much. However, it is lacking the vital spark that makes you want to come back to it again. Yes it's fun, well designed and competently programmed. But will you want to play it in two weeks time?

Sit back and watch 'em fly!

There are several different arena's for the Destruction Derby. One has a hump that, when hit precisely can fly you into the air, and another has a chasm down one side!

At the bottom right hand corner of the screen is a diagram showing the damage to your vehicle. When the arrows turn red, you should start to worry. If they flash then start to panic!

Help is at hand though, as a quick trip through the pits allows you a few seconds to repair yourself. In Wreckin' Racing mode, you can stop only once, but in Stock Car you can stop as many times as you like (not a good idea when it's a race against the clock).



The intro sequence starts out with the usual Psygnosis quality, lovely graphics and very high quality FMV. Unfortunately it goes down hill at the end and uses clips from in-game to pad it out. Overshot the budget maybe?

Jumps and humps are essential for sending your motor into orbit!

There are three different ways of playing Destruction Derby 2.

WRECKIN' RACING

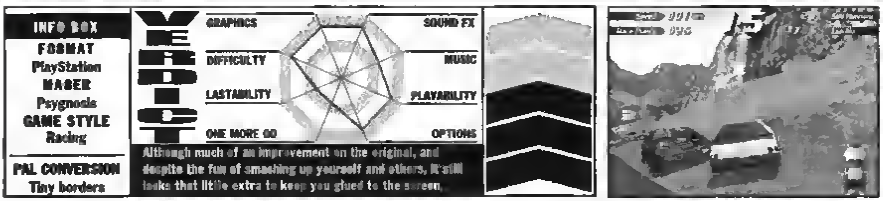
This sets you on a variety of courses with the simple goal of making as much damage to the other cars as possible. Even though you race for a fixed number of laps, you may as well ignore it because the points only come from spinning or destroying your opponents vehicles

STOCK CAR RACING

A straight race to be the first over the finish line. No points are given for damaging other cars, so it's for skilled and experienced racers only

DESTRUCTION DERBY

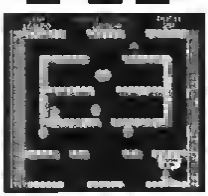
The main event, this sticks all the cars in an arena and inflict as much damage as possible. Cerrazy!



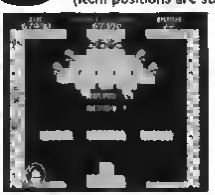
TIPS

BUBBLE BOBBLE (PlayStation/Saturn)

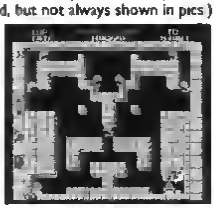
With 100 levels to get through, Bubble Bobble is not an easy game. So to give you a head start, here is a list of locations that certain useful objects appear. Remember, although there is a 90% chance that they will appear, the gameplay is suitably designed so that if you stand around and wait for them, they won't turn up. So the best advice is to play as normal, but keep an eye out. Also remember that the items listed are the most common and on occasion they will be totally different.
(Item positions are stated, but not always shown in pics.)



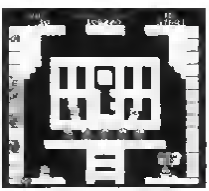
Level 3. Getting the umbrella at the top right warps you to level 10



Level 11. Another umbrella for another warp. Go for it!

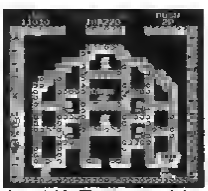


Level 16. A potion (middle left) fills the screen with collectibles

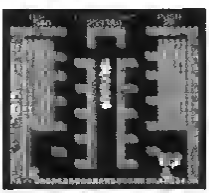


Level 17. The book (right middle) causes an earthquake and kills all!

Level 18. Get the drink (top) for invincibility



Level 21. The ring (top left) rains down stars and kills the enemy!



Level 28. Another potion (left) for collectibles

The **EXTEND** screen may look pretty, but don't risk your life for letter bubbles.

QUICKIES

SEGA AGES

AVAILABLE ON SEGA SATURN

By taking three of their most classic coin-ops of the 80's and sticking 'em onto one CD, Sega have given some of us what we have been waiting for for over a decade, arcade PERFECT conversions, and at a ridiculously generous price. Space Harrier, Afterburner II and Outrun are all pieces of arcade history, using the revolutionary sprite scaling techniques that Sega developed to create fast paced and realistic games. Although the gameplay is simplistic on each of these games, they are ideal for those times you want something less cerebral. Just slap the CD in, switch on and engage in mindless blasting or driving - and you will return to them time after time. This is really top nostalgia, and a must for anyone who remembers the 'good old days.'

●●●●●

TOMB RAIDER

AVAILABLE ON PLAYSTATION, SATURN AND PC

Tomb Raider has received quite a lot of hype from the computer press, and it is well deserved. One writer described it perfectly as a 3D Prince of Persia, and that's basically what it is. The freedom of movement is total, the difficulty curve perfectly calculated and the levels interesting and fairly varied, although they could have been more so. The only main criticism I can throw at it is that music is used very sparsely, and you are often playing in silence. This does create a more tense atmosphere, but sometimes you just wish for something to hum along to. The PlayStation version comes off better than the Saturn, with smoother movement and nicer colours, but all versions are as immersive and enjoyable as each other.

●●●●●

SOVIET STRIKE

AVAILABLE ON SONY PLAYSTATION

Following on from the successful Strike series on the 16-Bitters, Soviet Strike takes the isometric gameplay, but allows you 360 degrees rotation of the landscape. While being a bit jerky, it's graphically quite impressive at times, as the terrain is very realistically rendered with some lovely locations. The gameplay consists of the usual set of missions that you have to complete, and a limited supply of fuel and ammo dumps, which means some forward planning is required. The presentation must get a mention as it uses FMV to great effect. Little video clips describe weapons or locations, and well acted sequences are played as the game progresses, adding greatly to the overall atmosphere. It's maybe not as engaging as it could have been though, and the strategic elements can make it a bit of a drag for those of us who just want to get in there and have a blast.

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VIRTUA COP 2

AVAILABLE ON SEGA SATURN

Gun games are always good fun, and Sega have taken the formula to new limits. Virtua Cop 2 is an amazing conversion from the arcade, and really puts to rest any doubts over the Saturn's polygon handling. It moves at a very fast pace, with a lot of detail and no polygon break up, unlike so many other games around, even on the PlayStation. The game itself is superbly designed, and the levels and locations are excellent; from a subway carriage (hanging out of the window!) to a car chase through town, there is always something to look forward to. Each level has a choice of two routes as well to keep up the variety. As with most games of this type though, it is a bit limited in it's lastability, but high-score fans will have enough to keep them going for a while, and if you try using two guns at the same time, it's a right laff!

●●●●○

ON THE SCREEN

The Frighteners

OUT NOW AT CINEMAS EVERYWHERE

After a very long time without any hits, it seems that Michael J Fox is back on track. The Frighteners casts him as Frank Bannister, a Paranormal Investigator who will stoop to any depths of deception to make a fast buck. That's not to say he's a complete fraud though, as ever since a car accident where his wife was killed, he's been able to see the spirits of the dead.

Two of these spirits are particularly helpful to him - they cause paranormal havoc in someone's house and leave his business card conveniently lying around. Calls soon follow, and Bannister cleans up the mess - for a fee.

But all is not right. Years after a spree of murders in the town, people start mysteriously dying, apparently of heart attacks, and as Bannister is often seen at the funerals after trade, the finger is slowly pointed straight at him. However, he is the only one who can see what is really going on; numbers appearing on people's foreheads mark them next in line for the chop by a dark, cloaked and very Death-like figure with a scythe. But who or what is it?

Compared to most films, The Frighteners has had very little publicity over here, and it's a pity, as it's an extremely enjoyable film. The special effects alone are a good enough reason to see it, with some superb CGI effects - especially the Death character with it's sinister flapping robes.

Even though it's an effects extravaganza, it doesn't rely on them to keep you interested. The story is quite 'full' and moves along at a sufficient pace as to not bore you, and the mystery element is just enough to keep it going. There's plenty of humour as well - director Peter Jackson show his talent of balancing the macabre with the lighter side very competently indeed.

The only criticism is that the FBI agent is just a little too extreme for his own good, and the 'interrogation' scene is fairly pointless, and could have easily been snipped and not missed. But aside from that, it is wholly entertaining, and visually very impressive (gory in places too), and you shouldn't hesitate to go and see it if you get the chance.

Dragon Half

AVAILABLE ON VIDEO FROM A.D. VISION (01248 370044)

At times, anime can be just plain crazy. Dragon Half is a perfect example, with the standard fantasy routine turned on it's head with considerable success and laughs all round.

Mink is a young girl with a difference. She is the result of a marriage between a dragon and a human, a typical teenager apart from the wings. And tail. Oh, and the ability to breathe fire too. But what's she to do? She's fallen in love (as most girls have) with the handsome pop singer, Dick Saucer (yes, really) who happens to be a Dragonslayer by trade. And now Saucer has been contracted to hunt her down! Yipe!

Dragon Half never, EVER, takes itself seriously. It's just straight up Japanese-style madness from start to end. And it's funny. All the typical goofing and morphing from normal to SD (Super Deformed) proportions is here, and although this can become tiresome in more serious productions, in Dragon Half it works a treat.

The characters are fun - Mink is yer typical lovestruck teenage girl, who can't believe that Saucer would ever want to hurt her. Dick Saucer is a proud fighter that never seems to win, who has a habit of crooning as he walks around, and the bald-headed king is just a loon.

Sure, some of the gags don't work as well as they might but you're so into the feel of it that it doesn't really matter. If you're new to anime then you may not understand much of it, but that's purely a cultural thing that you'll get used to. If you're a seasoned anime fan then you'll be refreshed at the break from mindless sex and violence that is shovelled continuously out to us and really enjoy yourself. I just hope there will be more where this came from.

Hey! You! Go and buy this video now!

AUDIO REVIEWS

●GAME MUSIC●

MISTY BLUE
ALFA RECORDS
CAT. ALCA-123
*28 tracks * 50.33 mins*

First and foremost, this is a CD of 100% computer chip sound. Now there are those of you who will no doubt scoff at the idea of listening to this stuff, but this review is not for you (so push off). Containing 14 tracks from MISTY BLUE and 14 tracks from ACTRAISER, this CD is composed by Yuzo Koshiro, quite a popular man in the console scene for classic tunes like SUPER (REVENGE OF) SHINOBI and BARE (STREETS OF RAGE) KNUCKLE.

The sound quality of this collection is hard to define. It's a bit Megadrivey, but with a far better beat and crisply sampled drums, and the recording is very clearly done. The sound for ACTRAISER is a tad more basic, but nevertheless, it is very listenable, to the initiated anyway.

The music to MISTY BLUE is a strange selection. It starts with what would be a light piano piece called In The Morning, and then jumps to a racy, drummy affair which really doesn't get anywhere. Track 3 (Opening), is the first thing that makes you prick up your ears: a medium speed but gentle tune with some very effective sound. After that comes a mish mash of mainly slow themes of average worth until 'I Wanna Close To You' which is racy and pretty smart. But where Yuzo really shows his talent is track 9 - Misty Blue, which flows seamlessly into the next two tracks, Hold Me Tonight and Dancing Heart. Really, this is so very well composed that it's almost worth buying the CD just for this.

On to ACTRAISER, people who know the music from the SNES/SFC game may be disappointed, as the sound is not nearly as good. It really lacks a solid beat to make it stand out, but the tunes are all that matter and while not amazing, they're a good selection. The last track, however, missing from the SNES version as far as I'm aware is classic Koshiro and is bloody brilliant. It's one of those tunes that make you wish it were a few minutes longer!

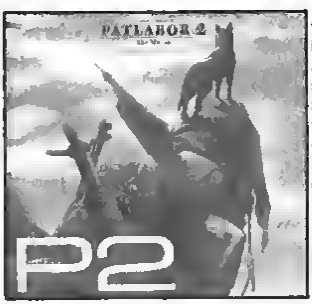
Overall, this CD is fairly patchy in places, but the Misty Blue set and some of the ACTRAISER tunes are classics, and more than make up for it.

●ANIME SOUNDTRACKS●

PATLABOR 2 THE MOVIE
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK "P2"
VAP INCCAT VPCG-84206
*13 tracks * 50:09 mins*

This soundtrack will not be everyone's cup of tea. If you've seen the movie (and if you haven't, why not?) then you'll have a good idea of what to expect, if not then this could be a bit tricky to describe.

Built around two recurring themes, one being a deep, bass string piece and the other a low, rolling xylophone piece, the main phrase that come into mind when trying to describe this soundtrack is moody. There's an almost ethereal feel to these tracks which can be very haunting in places, especially tracks 5 and 6, 'Unnatural City' I & II.



There are great differences in strength throughout this CD, one moment you're melting in so the quiet, moody piano of track 8 'With Love', and the next you're shocked out of your seat to the violins

of 'Outbreak' with its valkyrie-style envi pounding away in the background.

All the music is composed and performed by Kenji (Ghost In The Shell) Kawai who is now on my list of favourite Japanese composers. The booklet accompanying the CD is well worth a mention too. Sporting a strong image on the front cover and also on the first two pages by Yutaka Izubuchi, the booklet contains a selection of stills from the film, specs of the INGRAM, a voice cast and movie staff list and a discography of all the Padabor albums and singles (with some nice pictures of Noa, oh, and some mecha if you prefer that sort of thing instead).

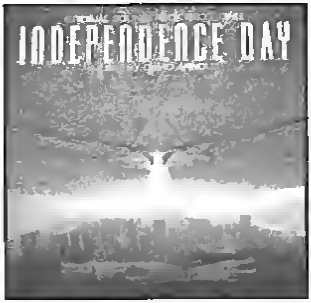
I loved the film and I love the CD as well. I recommend that you give this a try even if you weren't that keen on the movie, as I guarantee that it'll grow on you in time. Go on, you never know if you don't try.

●MOVIE SOUNDTRACKS●

INDEPENDENCE DAY
BMG Music
CAT 09026 68564 2
*14 tracks * 50.39 mins*

Only a few years ago, very few movie fans had heard of David Arnold. However, in a short space of time and only two major film soundtracks (out of four), he is fast proving himself as one of the most talented and promising composers to appear in a long, long time. Brushing aside his score for Brit film The

Young Americans, Arnold's first big break was with the surprise hit, Stargate, in which he produced a stunning soundtrack and set himself a standard that will be very difficult to beat. Now, teaming up again with the guys behind Stargate, the soundtrack to Independence Day proves that he is no one-hit-wonder. When it comes to writing music that works well in a movie and is equally listenable on it's own, Arnold has a distinct talent. His soundtrack to ID4, much like Stargate before it, is very thematic in it's approach, composed with a selection of definite tunes that come in to play at the appropriate times. The main theme is a perfectly patriotic piece, fitting the style

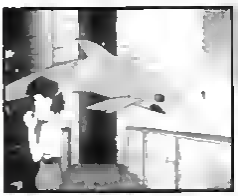


of the movie like a glove, and the others are both ominous and pounding enough to complement each other perfectly.

This is a soundtrack that rarely stops to take a breath - it is immensely powerful in places and while not as easy to get to grips with as Stargate was, is very much worth the effort. If I had to make a choice between the Stargate and ID4 soundtracks, I would have to say that the former work does win out, with a more varied and individual range of tracks, but ID4 puts up a good fight and is without doubt one of the best soundtracks of 1996, and one any serious fan cannot do without. So it's thumbs up again for Mr Arnold and it's nice to see a Brit doing so well. He's well on his way to becoming the next John Williams, and that's about the highest complement I can give anyone.

WHERE TO GET THEM

Anime soundtracks are available as import from many specialist shops. Try Anime Projekt (01248 370044) or Sheffield Space Centre (0114 2758905) for some of the better selections.
Tower Records, London (0171 439 2500) also has a limited supply in stock. They also stock Jap-pop.
Gamer music is far harder to come by but I know the aforementioned Tower Records does have some, but very few. If you're interested, try ringing them and import games stockists (ie Raven Games-01451 663410, Telegames-01143 280445 etc) and if enough people bug them, they may start to get some in.



FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD RIP-OFFS no.1

When Disney's *The Lion King* first came out, it caused some controversy with anime fans. While it claimed to be Disney's first original animated movie (i.e. not from a previous story/fairytale), it bore some startling similarities to an old Japanese anime series called (in the US) Kimba The White Lion. Not least of these was the name of the lead character (Kimba/Simba). What made matters worse was that Disney has always had a reputation of coming down very hard on anyone who even thinks about fracturing their copyrights in any way, yet 'Kimba' was not even credited as an influence. The upshot of all the evidence is that a major movie was ripped off an anime. But it hasn't stopped there. Anyone who saw the 'hit movie' Free Willy over Christmas may have thought that is was just another crappy Hollywood kid's story. But it is far more sinister than that. There is an animated film, released by Kiseki in the UK that has some eyebrow-raisingly similar plot points, despite being made two years earlier. Here is the evidence. Coincidence? You be the Judge.

FLY PEEK (1991)	FREE WILLY (1993)
●Young independent boy who has no father.	●Young independent boy who has no parents.
●Boy plays an ocarina which the whale strangely responds to.	●Boy plays a harmonica which the whale strangely responds to.
●The whale is captured and put into a public show.	●The whale is captured and put into a public show.
●There is pressure on the trainer to make the whale perform tricks.	●There is pressure on the trainer to make the whale perform tricks.
●The boy goes to the local market to get scraps to feed the whale.	●The boy goes to the local market to get scraps to feed the whale.
●The whale responds only to the boy, as if there is a link between them.	●The whale responds only to the boy, as if there is a link between them.
●The whale's mother is calling him from the ocean nearby. The whale whines because it can hear her.	●The whale's 'family' is calling him from the ocean nearby. The whale whines because it can hear them.
●The whale fails to perform at the big opening day (except for one jump over a gate to escape).	●The whale fails to perform at the big opening day.
●The boy tries to free the whale, but the bad-guy-owner attempts to stop him.	●The boy tries to free the whale, but the bad-guy-owner attempts to stop him.
●The whale is blocked from escaping by tide gates.	●The whale is blocked from escaping by nets.
●The boy plays his ocarina, leading the whale to it's freedom.	●The boy leads the whale to it's freedom.
●The whale makes a heroic jump over the flood gates, next to the boy, and onto freedom with it's mother.	●The whale makes a heroic leap over the rocks, over the boy's head and onto freedom with it's family.

Hiroshima Peace Park

Hiroshima, city in Japan south-western Honshu, capital of Hiroshima Prefecture at the head of Hiroshima Bay. The city was founded in 1594 on six islands in the Ota River delta. Hiroshima grew rapidly as a commercial city, and after 1868 it was developed as a military base.

(Microsoft Encarta 97)

In August 1955, under the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law, the Peace Park was constructed to act as a place for prayer and peace in memory of the 75,000 people who died from the atomic bomb. Since that day almost 200,000 people have succumbed to the effects of radiation sickness and other related illnesses brought about by this senseless and unnecessary act. If it wasn't for the Peace Park and it's terrible history, Hiroshima would seem like any other Japanese city with a population of just over a million, the high rise office blocks and ancient temples. When I visited Japan three years ago I had made the point of going to the Park with the hope of trying to understand what it was like on that fateful day.

The Peace Dome is the only surviving building from the blast to be left standing in its 'original' state. Previously the Industrial Promotion Hall , the dome has been left as a symbol of peace and an eternal reminder of the horrific devastation of the bomb. The dome hasn't changed in the 50 years since the bombing, with the exception of the supporting girders inside holding the frail structure together, and you get a strange feeling as you walk round the building with its twisted girders and skeletal dome.

Across the river from the Peace Dome, in the main part of the park is the Cenotaph. This concrete arch has, buried beneath it in a casket, a list with all the names of the known victims of the atomic bomb. There is also a flame burning in remembrance but, unlike other similar symbols of war, this is not an eternal flame as it will be extinguished when the last nuclear weapon is destroyed.

Next to the monument is a plaque on which these words are written

"THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED IN THE HOPE THAT HIROSHIMA, DEVASTATED BY THE WORLD'S FIRST ATOMIC BOMB ON 6 AUGUST 1945, WOULD BE REBUILT AS A CITY OF PEACE."

The epitaph reads

"LET ALL THE SOULS HERE REST IN PEACE; FOR WE SHALL NOT REPEAT THE EVIL."

It summons people everywhere to pray for the souls of the deceased A bomb victims and to join in the pledge never to repeat the evil of war. It thus expresses the 'Heart of Hiroshima' which enduring past grief and overcoming hatred, yearns for the realisation of true world peace with the coexistence and prosperity of all humankind. Wise words indeed.

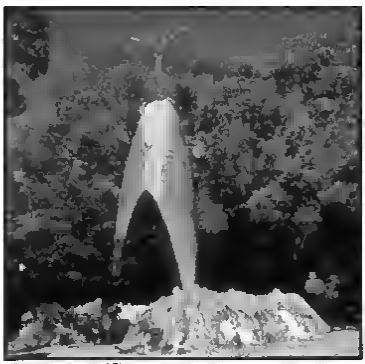
As well as the Peace Dome and the Cenotaph there are two other areas of the park which really bring the message home. The first is the Memorial Museum which houses some of the most moving and disturbing images I have ever seen. The first thing that hits you as you enter is a diorama of how the city looked just after the bomb was dropped. It is hard to imagine that barren wasteland in front of you used to be a busy city. Moving further into the museum the next 'exhibit' might seem rather strange at first sight. What

The Peace Dome is the only structure that survived 'intact' from the blast of the Atomic Bomb dropped on Hiroshima

Bon Festival in Hiroshima

The Mahayana Buddhist festival of Ullambana, known as Bon in Japan, is held in mid-July and marks the return of ancestral spirits to their former homes. Restless souls of those who died violently are also placated by the ceremonies, and at the end of the festival lanterns are set afloat to ferry all the spirits back to the land of the dead. In Hiroshima the ceremony has been adapted to commemorate those who died following the atomic bomb attack in 1945. Here, lanterns lit for the souls of the bomb victims float in front of the Atomic Bomb Memorial Dome, which has been preserved as it was after the bombing.
(Microsoft Encarta 97)

appears to be a set of ordinary stone steps with an even more ordinary dark stain on them might not seem very significant, until you learn that this is actually the 'shadow' of a person who was caught in the blast and vaporised instantly.



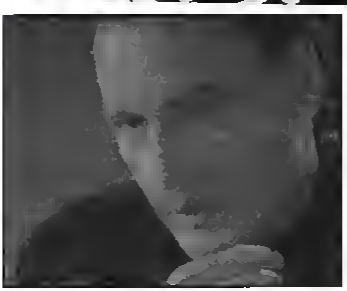
(Microsoft Encarta 97)

The second area of the park holds the Children's Peace Memorial. This is represented by a wonderful statue of a young girl holding and origami crane. The girl is Sadako and when she was diagnosed with leukaemia at the age of 10 years decided to fold 1000 paper cranes, believing that she would recover upon completion of this task (In Japan the crane is regarded as a symbol of happiness and longevity). Unfortunately Sadako died after completing only 644 cranes, but the children at her school finished the remaining 356 and the string of 1000 paper cranes was buried with her. This has now become quite a custom among schools in Japan and the base of the statue is bathed in thousands upon thousands of coloured paper cranes in memory of this brave young girl.

It would be difficult for anyone not to come away from this park and city without feeling the mix of emotions brought about by the images presented here. You not only feel disgusted that this thing could have happened, not once but *twice* with the bombing of Nagasaki, but you also have a sense of wonder and respect at the courage and bravery of the people of Hiroshima who took their devastated city and rebuilt it like a phoenix from the ashes into a thriving community with green parks and happy faces. And to think they said that nothing would ever grow here.

Sadly, there are fewer survivors left each year from that day, but those who are can be seen in the parks, talking to the children and passing on the stories of that terrible time in the hope that this new generation will make sure that this cannot and will not happen again.

UMBILICAL PALS



John de Lancie

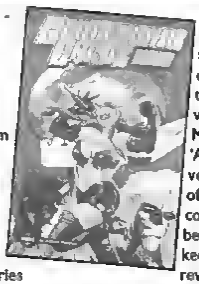
In an effort to be totally unoriginal and copy everything that other people do, we present the 'lookalikes' bit.

In the spotlight this issue is John de Lancie, who plays the omnipotent 'Q' in Star Trek, and the bloke from the Halls Mentholyptus advert. Quite a striking resemblance, wouldn't you say? No? Well sod you then.

Bloke

ON THE PAGE

BUBBLEGUM CRISIS - GRAND MAL
By Adam Warren
MANGA BOOKS
*£9.99 * 100 pages **
Full colour



Taking his leave from scriptwriter Toren Smith, GRAND MAL is American artist Adam Warren's own work, full colour and set in the world of the popular anime series BUBBLEGUM CRISIS. For those of you who are not familiar with the anime, BUBBLEGUM CRISIS is set in Mega Tokyo, where the giant Genom Corporation has a strong hold over the city. With the AD Police unable to keep up with the crime, a vigilante group-for-hire called the Knight Sabers have sprung out of the cracks, wearing powerful 'hardsuits' that afford them a great deal of protection, agility and powerful weaponry. The group is made up of four women, the most energetic and popular of which is the rock singer, Priss.

The story behind GRAND MAL begins when a dishevelled looking man with white hair arrives in Mega Tokyo. Suffering from hallucinations of machinery engulfing him, he finds himself fighting them, and the uncontrollable bouts of extreme violence that follow. Making his way into the city, his hate for the Genom Corporation drives him on, until he can destroy them with the technology that they created. What results is a battle that has the Knight Sabers fighting for their lives.

Before I give any sort of opinion on this pseudo-manga, I should explain the following. In times past, I used to read 2000AD. The reason that manga had such a great appeal to me was that, unlike western comics, the stories and action flowed beautifully between scenes, much more like a movie than a comic. By comparison, the English and American comics seemed clumsy and difficult to read.

Whereas Japanese comics rely mostly on the pictoral elements to tell a story, western ones are often cluttered with boxes of text to wade through. And this is where, in my opinion, GRAND MAL falls down. It looks like an 'American Manga' and it reads in a very western way. For the number of pages, very little of actual consequence seems to happen, and before long I had to force myself to keep reading, purely so I could review it.

I'm not a Warren basher, and I enjoy a good book as much as the next man, but when you start to fill a comic with so many disjointed pieces of text, it becomes a chore, rather than a pleasure, to read.

If you like American style comics then you may well enjoy this, but if you've converted to manga because of the way it is written and presented, then I doubt that there's enough here for your money. I can think of better ways to spend a tenner.

LAPUTA - THE CASTLE IN THE SKY
ANIME COMICS SPECIAL
Volumes 1-4
(Japanese Language)
*710 yen each * 164 pages each*
Full Colour

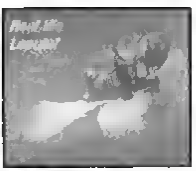
Anime comics have yet to become widespread in the west, but in Japan, they are very popular. To create them, original cells are photographed from the chosen film, series etc. and word balloons and effects are added on top. What you end up with is a high quality colour comic with a wealth of stills to drool over.

The subject of this set will no doubt be familiar to anime fans. One of director Hayao Miyazaki's greatest works, LAPUTA has already made an appearance on ITV a couple of times, but is unfortunately unavailable on video. The story of LAPUTA, very loosely based around a tale from Gulliver's Travels, involves a mystical island of untold treasure and power that floats in the sky. The film opens with a scene of sky pirates attacking a government airship in search of Sheeta - a young girl with a magical 'levitation stone', who has been taken from her home by a secret agent called Muska. During the confusion, Sheeta climbs outside the ship, desperately clinging on, but slips and falls through the clouds to the land below.

Losing consciousness, she is unaware of the levitation stone as it bursts into life, floating her gently down to the ground where Pazu (Padzu in the dub), a young boy who works in a mine, finds her and takes her home. The pair then find themselves being pursued by both the pirates (the Dola family) and the army, until Sheeta is recaptured and Pazu joins forces with Dola and her boys. They set out to rescue Sheeta and finally aim to reach the island of Laputa, which Muska is intent on controlling.

Anyone who enjoys the works of Miyazaki will love these books, as they give you a chance to really appreciate all the artwork that goes into one of his films. The fact that it's in Japanese is of little importance, even if you've never seen the film before. Also, if you were one of the poor souls who saw Laputa the second time it was shown on TV, you'll get the chance to see all the bits that were cut out (and there was a lot!). And even better, there's an advert for Laputa drinks in the back of each, that features a photo of a real-life Sheeta and Pazu on one of Dola's flying 'dragonflies'! Anyone for a live-action version?

You should be able to find the LAPUTA - ANIME COMIC SPECIAL books at specialist shops like The Sheffield Space Centre (0114) 2758905 or Asahiya Shoten in Yaohan Plaza, London (0181 2000039)

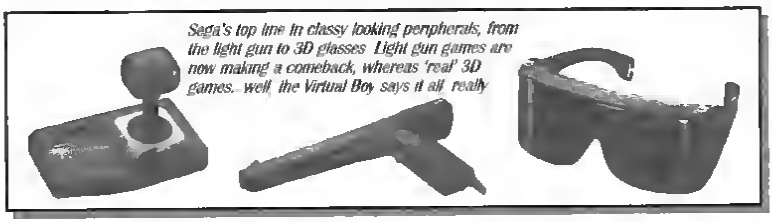


RETRO GAMING

Retro gaming. What's it all about eh? Well it's not about some obsessive trainspotting type who still refuses to submit to the fact that his Spectrum is NOT a better machine than the Nintendo 64. It's a way of acknowledging the heritage of video games today, and most of all it's pure nostalgia.

But retro isn't just about the era of the Speccy and Commodore 64 as some people would have you believe. We mustn't forget the more recent deaths in the Family, such as the NES and Master System. Even the Megadrive and PC Engine are old enough now to come under the great retro umbrella, and we will be dealing with them in time.

But the first machine I want to deal with is Sega's good ole Master System. Although it didn't have a big success in Japan and the States, it single-handedly resurrected the console scene in the UK, thanks to careful marketing by Virgin/Mastertronic and some top name arcade conversions. In the Bleak Years when the 8-Bit computers were slowly running out of steam, there was finally a light at the end of the tunnel.



Sega's top line in classy looking peripherals, from the light gun to 3D glasses. Light gun games are now making a comeback, whereas 'real' 3D games... well, the Virtual Boy says it all, really.

One of the good things about the Master System was it's choice of cool looking peripherals. The first of these was for those westerners who couldn't get the hang of the good old joypad - the Sega Control Stick. Or the Mushroom as it was known be everybody else. As you can see, it is quite an odd design for a joystick, but it was just the thing for that true 'arcade feel'. Maybe.

In fact, it is probably the worst joystick I have ever had the misfortune to use - you'd get more control with those sad little screw-in knobs that came with the original pads, and they were a joke. Just try putting in an *Up, Up, Down, Down-Left* etc chest in. Not a chance, mate!

Next up is the Sega Light Phaser. This was in direct competition with Nintendo's Zapper gun, but with some classier tides, it was much more fun. The combo cartridge that came with it contained three simple mini games which were fun enough for a while, but it was stuff like Gengster Town and the graphically excellent Rambo III that really made it worthwhile. Remember, without games like these, Virtue Cop and Time Crisis might never have come to pass.

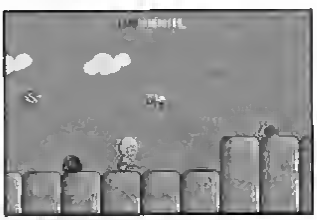
Thirdly came the 3D glasses. By rapidly flicking the lenses in time with the screen, the 3D effect worked surprisingly well. Two Sega classics, Outrun and Space Harrier were given a 3D overhaul, and although it slowed the games down a little the effect was worth it. Oh, the screaming when in Space Harrier 3D a row of spikes came hurtling out of the screen at you! Great stuff!

One of the first three games I got on the Master Systems (along with Hang On and Out Run) was Wonderboy. Converted from the arcade version, Wonderboy is one of the all time classic platform games. The gameplay is extremely simple - no exploration or puzzles - just leg it from left to right, jumping chasms, rocks and meanies while throwing your self-replenishing hatchet at anything that dares to move. Collectibles are hidden inside eggs, and these include energy top-ups and the like, but also a skateboard which lets you power through the level (unable to stop!) and an invincibility angel. Cool!

When Sega converted Wonderboy, they managed a virtually arcade perfect job, improving on some of the graphics like the frogs and octopuses. The moving platforms were a little too much for the poor MS to handle though and the dreaded sprite flicker is very much in evidence. But far from ruining the game, it makes it easier to see which platforms are waiting to plunge you to your death, so I'm not complaining!

It's strange to think that a game written on a crumbly old 8-Bit console can still be great fun today, but it is. And I don't just mean in e l-suppose-it-was-pretty-good-for-the-time sense. It still is a smart game, and probably the best, or at least most long lasong arcade game on the Master System.

INTERESTING FACT BIT: The Japanese version was called Super Wonder Boy and the level layout is slightly different, and a bit harder too.

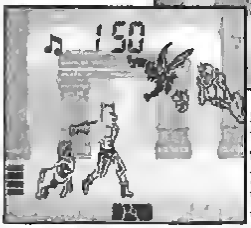


WONDERBOY is great fun. Buy it!

Another long lived game on the Master System was Shanghai. Not an arcade game at all. Shanghai is a puzzle game that uses the tiles from the ancient Chinese game of Mah Jong.

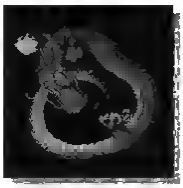
The tiles are set up in a certain formation, each type with three 'duplicates' that it can be paired to. The object of the game is to remove all the tiles from the table - but there is a catch. You can only remove matching pairs, and these must be free to move either left or right, and nothing can be on top of them. It sounds pretty weird, and it takes some getting used to (especially the Chinese characters on the tiles), but it really is one of the most enjoyable and addictive puzzle games ever devised.

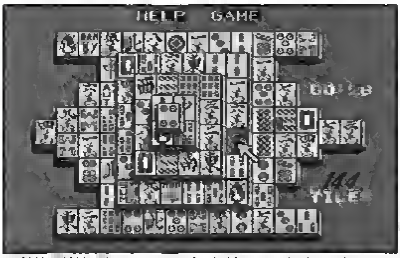
The Master System version was graphically well done - a lot of Amiga Public Domain versions I have seen made it very difficult to judge the height - and was blessed with three tunes during play (two great, and one OK). But the best bit is the ending, where a brilliantly drawn green dragon appears on screen, blows a fireball, then vanishes from the tail upwards in a very nice effect for the time.



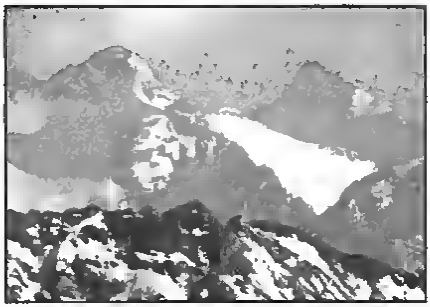
While we're on the subject of Sega stuff, during a clearout one day, I came across one of my favourite bit of spin-off gimmickry, the Altered Beast watch! This is what you call *real* class! As your beast chappie strolls along, you can punch away (and even jump kick) at the attacking beasties around you. As with the original, power-ups are collected by killing the wolves, and when you get enough, you transform. It's just like the real thing! (Erm, well your head changes and that's all, but it's the thought that counts.)

Needless to say, that hours of fun could be had by all, until the batteries ran out, at least and the screen got clogged up with dust and grime. Remember that?





SHANGHAI. She may not look like much, but she's got it where it counts, kid.



ICEMAN SPOTTED ON MOUNTAIN

Any practising Forteans among the readership may be interested in this little gem. In February of this year, Horizon did a series of documentaries about Icemen - The frozen bodies of people found in cold, mountainous areas. But while panning across just such a landscape, the eagle-eyed may have noticed the image of a man's face in the mountainside. Could this have been the real Iceman?

NEXT ISSUE

Now the Special Editions are out, we're Star Wars mad. We'll give our highly detailed (picky) opinions, have a look at the ultimate reference book 'The Star Wars Chronicles' and cast our eyes over some of the older and newer Star Wars games.

Along with top game reviews, CD's, anime (Neon Genesis Evangelion) and all the little snippets that are so much more than mere space fillers, this is one issue you can't afford to miss!

Issue 2 is out around July 7th and costs £1.90 including p&p. Cheques/Postal Orders made out to: Paul Weller. Order now!